Individual and Contextual Effects on the Educational Attainment of the First, Second, and Third generations in Canada

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Why some immigrant groups, such as the Chinese consistently show high achievement and other immigrant groups, such as Portuguese and Germans, consistently show low achievement is an enduring question. What is more perplexing, these achievement differences remain regardless of parents' background. While media reports consistently credit the high or low value on education placed by immigrant communities[1], how and why immigrant communities matter for educational attainment is less understood. Thus, this project examines how community characteristics affect the educational attainment of the children of immigrants in Canada?

Whether the children of immigrants achieve high or low levels of educational attainment depends on a combination of factors. Educational attainment is largely determined by individual characteristics—such as sex, age, and parents' socioeconomic status—and the contextual environment that children grow up in. One important context is the coethnic community; within neighborhoods, children may live closely with people from the same national origin, and the socioeconomic status of these coethnics may influence their educational attainment. Still, another context is the parents' origin country. My study will provide a systemic analysis of three factors—individual, community, and group—on educational attainment of the first, second, and third or higher generations in Canada.

Generation status and educational attainment

Three hypotheses— straight line hypothesis, accommodation without assimilation, and optimism hypothesis—make predictions are generational status and educational attainment. These hypotheses are derived from the classical and segmented

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[1] http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/do-ethnic-enclaves-impede-integration/article740525/page1/

assimilation theories but the assimilation theories alone are not sufficient for understanding how these processes differ by generation because neither make explicit predictions or discussions about generational status. Straight line assimilation posits that each subsequent generation closes the educational gap with native borns or the mainstream population, but it is not clear which generation the mainstream refers. Segmented assimilation focuses on the children of immigrants and posits that there are several educational pathways that these children may find themselves in depending on the contexts in which they are received. Segmented assimilation discusses these outcomes relative to white middle-class but provide no reference to generational status.

The first framework is the straight line hypothesis which posited that over time, the descendants of immigrants would obtain educational levels that resembled those of native born Whites. With each successive generation, the educational attainment of the descendants of immigrants would increase, thereby reducing native born Whites' educational advantage over time (Gans 1992:174; Gordon 1964:72; Lieberson 1973; Warner and Srole 1945:74). Second, the accommodation without assimilation framework posits that recent immigrant youth may be the highest academic achievers. In turn, educational attainment would decline with time in the host country as immigrant youth become more similar to their native born peers. A third perspective, the immigrant characteristics framework, posits that the educational attainment of immigrant youth relative to native borns is contingent on the characteristics of the parent's generation.

The three generational hypotheses above have been examined by a multi-level study by Perreira et al. (2006), who examined individual, school, and neighborhood effects on dropping out among the first, second, and third generations. Perreira et al.

(2006) found that individual, school, and neighborhood characteristics shaped dropping out. Additionally, the three generational perspectives above have been directly assessed by an individual level study by Kao and Tienda (1995), who found that individual characteristics, such as gender, race, and family background, influenced how generational status would influence academic achievement. However, the three generational hypotheses have not been evaluated by empirical studies of contextual factors at different levels. For instance, contextual studies have examined the effects of the coethnic community (Bygren and Szulkin 2010; Gronqvist 2006) and national origin group (Feliciano 2005, 2006; Levels et al. 2008) on academic performance or educational attainment, but not specifically in terms of the first, second, and third generations.

While empirical studies suggest that individual, community, and group characteristics influence educational attainment, these three levels have not been analyzed together for the first, second, and third generations. Perreira et al. (2006) comes the closes to this synthetic analysis by arguing that individual and contextual factors affect dropping out. However, their analysis only examined individual level factors and did not account for community or group factors.

Thus, no study has combined individual, community, and group characteristics to test the three generational hypotheses. This paper will assess the effects of three levels of factors on educational attainment to determine which generational hypotheses the foreign born and native born are conforming to. The three frameworks—straight line assimilation, accommodation without assimilation, and immigrant characteristics—make predictions about how the coethnic community affects generational differences on educational attainment. I combine the literatures on the generational frameworks with

empirical studies on the individual factors, coethnic community, and national origin group.

Accommodation without Assimilation

In contrast to straight-line assimilation, the accommodation without assimilation framework posits that recent immigrant youth are more likely to obtain high levels of education by purposely maintaining ties to their immigrant culture (Gibson 989; Portes and Zhou 1993; Zhou and Bankston 1998). Gibson (1989) found that Punjabi immigrant youth achieved educational success by limiting primary interaction with American peers and remained connected to coethnic peers and adults in the coethnic community. Thus, according to the accommodation without assimilation framework, immigrant youth that are connected to their coethnic community will have higher levels of educational attainment.

There are three ways an immigrant's ethnic community in the destination country affects educational attainment: 1.) level of education; 2.) level or resources; and 3.) community size. First, immigrant youth living in ethnic communities with high levels of collective education also obtain high education whereas second generation living in poorly educated ethnic communities also obtain low education because coethnics act as role models (Gibson 1988; Gibson and Bhachu 1988). Second, ethnic communities with higher earnings have higher resources, such as supplementary ethnic schools, which facilitate greater academic success among immigrant youth (Zhou and Kim 2006). Third, the number of coethnics living in the neighborhood (community size) may also shape second generation educational attainment, though its effect is inconclusive. Ethnographic studies on the US found that living with more coethnic neighbors had a positive effect on

educational attainment because they supervise children, making it difficult for youth to engage in deviant behavior (Gibson 1988; Zhou and Bankston 1988). However, quantitative studies in Sweden found a negative effect (Bygren and Szulkin 2010; Gronqvist 2006); these studies were more convincing because they examined neighborhoods using registry data for the entire Swedish population, suggesting that living among coethnic neighbors negatively affected second generation education. *According to the accommodation without assimilation framework, the first generation will have the highest levels of education compared with the second and third generations. Coethnic community characteristics will positively influence the first generation's educational attainment.*

Optimism Hypothesis

A second perspective posits that the second generation—immigrants' children born in the host country—will exceed the educational levels of the first generation and the third and higher generation because the second generation has access to the immigrant culture as well as mainstream institutions. On the one hand, the second generation youth inherit the positive attitudes and determinism of their immigrant parents. On the other hand, the second generation obtained most if not all of their education in the host country so they are primarily socialized in the host country so they will have greater English proficiency than their first generation peers as well as their parents. According to the framework, the second generation have access to the coethnic community like the first generation, but also benefit from their characteristics that their parents brought with them, also referred to as national origin group characteristics.

Second generation education is influenced by two national origin group characteristics 1.) educational selectivity and 2.) economic inequality. First, educational selectivity (the educational difference between those who migrate (immigrants) and those who remain in the origin country (non-immigrants)) positively influences second generation educational attainment. The second generation of highly selective groups are more likely to obtain higher levels of education than the second generation of less selective groups (Borjas 1995; Feliciano 2005, 2006). Second, the second generation with parents from countries with greater economic inequality, compared with less economic inequality, are more likely to have greater academic performance because parents set high expectations and pressure children to excel (Levels et al. 2008). *According to the optimism framework, the second generation will have the highest levels of education compared with the first and third generations. Coethnic communities and national origin group characteristics will positively influence the second generation's educational attainment.*

Straight line Assimilation

Straight-line assimilation theory posits that with each successive generation, the educational attainment of the descendants of immigrants would increase, thereby reducing the educational advantage of the later generations. First and second generation individuals would lose their ties to their immigrant background and their ethnic communities. From this perspective, coethnic communities negatively affected educational attainment because coethnics would participate in ethnic institutions that were isolated from the majority of the host society and thereby have lower participation in mainstream institutions (i.e., English language schools) (Warner and Srole 1943;

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review in Alba and Nee 1987:855; review in Marston and Van Valey 1979; review in Yancey et al. 1976)

Straight line assimilation predicted that native born or later generation individuals with the least contact with coethnics would have higher levels of educational attainment. Thus, immigrants would have the lowest levels of education because they would be the most connected with the coethnic community. For instance, Matuti-Bianchi (1986) found that the most successful students were those that were native-born and had the least contact with coethnics. *According to straight line assimilation, the third generation will have higher education than the first and second generations because they are less likely to live in coethnic communities.*

Methodology

Ethnic Diversity Study

The data analyzed in this paper is from the non-public release of Statistics Canada's 2002 Ethnic Diversity Study (EDS). The EDS is a one-time, national survey of over 42,000 non-Aboriginal Canadian residents aged 15 and older. The survey collected information on social, economic, and cultural life for persons of different ethnic backgrounds in Canada. The survey also over-sampled non-British and non-French minority groups and obtains large samples of different minority and immigrant groups. This makes it easy to make comparisons of many different immigrant groups. Non-public EDS also has information on the census tract that the respondent lives in. Using the tract level information in EDS, I matched this with aggregated information from the 20% sample of the 2001 Census to construct characteristics of the coethnic community. I also matched EDS data with aggregated data from the 1991 and 2001 Census 20% microdata and

public sources (UNESCO and the World Bank) to match individual data with data on the neighborhood and national origin group. Thus, I was able to gather various characteristics about the ethnic community, neighborhood, and group of individuals. The EDS is a probabilistic survey so a survey weight is assigned to each individual to represent the target population at the national level. EDS survey weights were applied to all analyses to produce estimates that are proportional to the Canadian population. Similarly, Census weights were applied to all analyses with the Census when constructing community variables (community education, size, and income), neighborhood SES, group income, and educational selectivity; the weights were used to produce fully representative estimates from the 20% sample data.

This study focuses on individuals from the 1.5 and second generation, ages 25 to 65. Respondents were included in the study first by their mother's country of birth. If there was no detailed information on the mother's place of birth (the most common example being that the respondent included a region or a country that was no longer in existence, such as USSR or Yugoslavia), then respondents were included by their father's country of birth. In my sample, responses to mother and father's country of birth matched 80 percent of the time. The number of suitable responses for the mother and father were almost equal. In this study, the 1.5 generation includes individuals that immigrated between the ages of 0-14 and individuals born in Canada with at least one immigrant parent are considered second generation. The first generation (those arriving after the age of 15) are excluded from this study because if included, the educational attainment of immigrants 25 and older would be too similar to the individuals that make up the coethnic community (immigrant adults age 25 or higher).

Variables and Measures

The data is derived from non-public 2002 EDS and 1991 and 2001 Census data that can only be accessed from Canadian Research Data Centers (RDC). Due to the detailed information in the data sets, specific descriptive information can never be released in order to prevent disclosure risks of personal information. These include categories with cell sizes smaller than 10 and unweighted descriptive data cannot be released at any time. Table 1 provides the descriptive statistics for the variables used in the analysis.

Dependent variable

The main dependent variable is educational attainment, measured as an ordinal variable with three categories: less than a high school degree, high school degree, and college degree or more. To ensure that the sample reflects children of immigrants that were at least partially educated in the Canadian school system, the sample has been restricted to persons who received their highest degree in Canada. A small proportion of respondents received their degree outside of Canada; separate analyses with both samples show little difference in the results.

Independent Variables

Community Variables

There are three community variables: community education, community income, and community size. Community variables are measured at the census tract level for immigrants age 25 or older from the same country of birth. All community variables are calculated from the 20% microdata sample of the 2001 census. Community education measures the average years of schooling of all individuals 25 and older from the same birth country in each tract. Community income is the natural log of income of all

individuals 25 and older from the same birth country in each tract. Community size is the

weighted total of individuals 25 and older from the same birth country in a tract. I use a

survey weight to produce estimates that are proportional to the Canadian population.

Community size is a categorical variable with three categories: small (1 to 40 persons),

medium (41 to 300 persons), and large (301 to 120146 persons). I use a categorical

measure because of a skewed distribution in which many of the observations lie around 0.

National Origin Group Variables

I control for two group variables that measure the characteristics of the different national

origin groups in Canada[2]: educational selectivity and Gini coefficient. I calculated the

educational selectivity of each group using Feliciano's (2005, 2006) method. I calculate

the differences between the average group education between immigrants in the

destination country and non-migrants in the origin country. The educational selectivity of

the national origin group in Canada was calculated by aggregating individual level data

from the 20% sample of the 1991 and 2001 Censuses. The average education of the

national origin group in the origin country was retrieved from published data from

UNESCO Statistical Yearbooks, 1961-1997. Educational selectivity ranges from 0.249 to

0.833. A value of 0.833 suggests that an immigrant's educational attainment will exceed

a nonmigrant's education from the same country 83% more often than a nonmigrant's

education will exceed an immigrant's education from the same country (Feliciano

2005:849; Lieberson 1980:201).

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[2] I also coded for group size and group education but they were not included in the analyses because they
were highly correlated with other group characteristics (Gini coefficient and group income) and community
education, respectively.

The Gini coefficient is calculated for the origin country of first generation respondents, the parent's origin country for the second generation, and Canada for the third or higher generations to capture the level of inequality and economic development of the origin country. Ideally, I would like to capture these characteristics when individuals left the origin country. However, there is no information on the year of migration for parents. Thus, I use the Gini coefficient based on the year educational selectivity was calculated. Though this is an imperfect proxy to capture the historical time period, there is a consistent time period for income inequality, economic development, and educational selectivity measures.

I measure income inequality using the Gini coefficient for each country. I collected each country's Gini coefficient from published information from the World Bank. Ideally, I would like to obtain information on the Gini coefficient closest to the year immigrants left their origin country. However, since this information is not available, I code each country's Gini coefficient with data from the year closest to the educational selectivity year (World Bank, 1983-2001). I recoded the Gini coefficient into a dichotomous variable: a low (19.4-33) and high (33-59.2) Gini coefficient. A Gini coefficient of zero represents perfect equality and a Gini coefficient of 100 represents maximal inequality in a country. Thus, the higher the Gini coefficient, the greater the inequality in a country.

Individual and Family Background

In total, I include seven individual level variables in the analysis: father's education, grew up with biological parents, female, age, region, visible minority, and language. Father's education is an ordinal variable with three categories: less than a high school degree, high

school degree, and college or more. I use father's education because there are more cases than mother's education. There are no cases where mother's education is available even when father's education is missing. Less than a high school degree is the reference group. Biological parents is a dummy variable for whether an individual grew up with both biological parents or some other family arrangement as the reference group. Female is a dichotomous variables with males as the reference group. Language is a dichotomous measure of whether a respondent speaks the official language and a non-official language or other (speaking only official language or only non-official language). Age is a continuous variable. Region is a dichotomous variable for Quebec and the reference group is all other provinces in Canada. Region is included as a control, as other works (Christofides et al. 2001; Reitz 2004) suggest the important role of region in determining postsecondary education in Canada. Visible minority is a dichotomous variable for whether the respondent is considered a visible minority or not in Canada.

Results

Table 1: How does educational attainment differ for the first, second, and third generations?

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Table 1 presents the odds ratios of obtaining less than a high school degree, a high school degree, or graduating from college among the first, second, and third or higher generations. The standard errors for each variable are presented in parentheses underneath the odds ratios and the p-values are presented underneath the standard errors. Sample sizes have been rounded to a base of 10 to minimize disclosure risk.

In Table 1, I present three models for each generational group. The first model

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presents the descriptive account of the coethnic community on educational attainment without any type of controls. The second model examines the descriptive account of national origin group characteristics on educational attainment without any controls. This model cannot be analyzed for the third generation because group characteristics reflect the country characteristics of Canada and thus, are constant for this group. The third model examines the full model with community, neighborhood, and individual factors.

Model 1 shows that for the first generation, the odds ratio for community education is 1.44 and this is statistically significant. This suggests that a one unit increase in the average education of the coethnic community increases the odds of higher education for the first generation by 1.44. Community income and size are not significant. Model 2 shows that the odds ratio for income inequality (Gini coefficient) is 0.41 and is statistically significant. The odds ratio for educational selectivity is 1.79 and statistically significant. Model 3 shows that net of all controls, community education remains significant. The odds ratio for fathers with a college degree or more is 3.11 and significant. Overall, for the first generation, coethnic community education, and father's education are significant predictors of educational attainment.

Model 4 shows that for the second generation, the odds ratio for community education is 1.10 and statistically significant. In Model 5, the odds ratio for educational selectivity is 1.30 and significant. Model 6 shows that net of all control, the effect for community education is no longer significant. Being bilingual as opposed to monolingual has an odds ratio of 3.72 and it is statistically significant. The odds ratio for father with a college degree or more is 3.19 and significant. The odds ratio for age is 0.93 and significant. For the second generation, community education is a significant predictor of

education but its effect is explained away by group and individual controls. Individual characteristics, such as bilingualism, father's education, and age are the strongest predictors of education among the second generation, net of controls.

Model 7 shows that community education has an odds ratio of 1.65 and is statistically significant. Model 8 shows that net of all controls community education is significant. Growing up with both biological parents has an odds ratio of 1.94 and is statistically significant. The odds ratio for Quebec is 1.46 and statistically significant. The odds ratio for fathers with a high school degree is 1.55 and the odds ratio for fathers with a college degree or more is 2.97. Age has an odds ratio of 0.96 and is significant. Overall, for the third generation, community education, region, father's education, and age are strong predictors of educational attainment.

Discussion

The main finding of this paper is that living with educated coethnics has a significant effect on educational attainment for immigrant children, those born abroad and immigrated after the age of 14. For the first generation, the effect of educated coethnics is more influential than that of the parents and other family characteristics, suggesting that the average education of coethnics has a unique effect. This suggests that immigrant children benefit from exposure to the educated coethnic adults outside of the family. Community education was also significant for the third or higher generations but because the coethnics of the third or higher generation consist of third or higher generation Canadians, this suggests that neighborhood characteristics may be a more important predictor for these native borns.

The literature suggests three possible ways that highly educated coethnic adults may assist later arriving immigrants in their educational attainment. The first is by maintaining or setting high aspirations (Bohlmark 2008). In general, entering the school system at an older age will put the child at a disadvantage (Schaafsma and Sweetman 2001:1069) because older-arriving children need to adjust to the curriculum, language, and culture of the host society whereas immigrant children arriving at younger ages have lower adjustment costs. Earlier-arriving immigrants are more likely to develop educational aspirations that are in line with native born children (Gonzalez 2003:203). For older-arriving immigrants, educated adults may help to maintain high aspirations as they have been through the education system and maintain highly educated backgrounds from the origin country (Gibson 1989). Similarly, Gibson (1989); Gibson and Bhachu (1988); and Zhou and Kim (2006) argued that highly educated coethnic adults establish and maintain high standards for community children. This can be especially important for older-arriving immigrants given the educational barriers they face.

Second, highly educated coethnic adults may assist with the communication costs associated with language. This is particularly true for later arriving immigrants lacking proficiency in the host language (review in Steinberg et al.1984). Thus, living with educated coethnics may buffer this negative effect because educated coethnic adults may be proficient in the host country language and can serve as direct or indirect translators for communication between children living in the ethnic community and the host society (Chiwsick and Miller 2002:4).

Third, living with educated adults may be associated with higher educational attainment because educated coethnics can provide opportunities to ethnic schools.

Ethnic schools offer supplemental education and tutoring that may lead to higher educational attainment (Zhou and Kim 2006). Ethnic schools are related to living with educated coethnics in two ways. First, many ethnic schools are available in ethnic suburbs with many highly educated coethnics. Second, ethnic schools act as a space where immigrant parents of varying English proficiency can network with educated coethnics and access important information about the school system (Zhou and Kim 2006).

The results of this paper support the accommodation without assimilation framework and contribute more generally to assimilation theories. For the first generation, ties and connections to the coethnic community are associated with higher education, above and beyond the family. This suggests that the average education of coethnic adults seems to alleviate the negative effects of arriving later into the host country. My results show that delayed assimilation works for the first generation but is less effective for the second generation. The effect of educated coethnics diminishes over time and matters less for the second generation. This is particularly true for the second generation who are highly assimilated, with highly educated parents and live in highly SES neighborhoods. Thus, the effect of educated coethnic adults may serve a transitional role, helping children to adapt and acquire the skills to succeed in the school system of the host country (Kao and Tienda 1995: 4; Gibson 1989) but provide little in the way of cultural maintenance.

This paper adds to the existing literature by systematically examining how the coethnic community affects the educational attainment process of the first, second, and third or higher generations for a nationally representative sample. My study also adds

specification to our understanding of the ethnic community by identifying a certain

process by which adult coethnics may shape educational attainment—helping immigrant

children assimilate. My results for the first generation sample show support the ethnic

community literature but there is little support for the second generation sample. Thus,

ethnographic studies that find a positive effect of the ethnic community may be more

relevant for the immigrant children than for the second generation. Future research may

look into why the process differs for the two groups.

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Table 1: Odds Ratio from Ordinal Logistic Regression predicting Educational Attainment for 1, 2, and 3+ generations

	First Generation			Second Generation			Third + Generation	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8
Community								
Education	1.44***		1.36***	1.10***		1.01	1.65**	1.42***
	(0.08)		(0.12)	(0.03)		(0.03)	(0.09)	(0.14)
Income	0.64		1.04	1.07		0.96	0.74	1.04
	(0.26)		(0.59)	(0.21)		(0.17)	(0.16)	(0.24)
Size	1.11		1.45	1.11		1.18	1.02	0.74
	(0.20)		(0.42)	(0.13)		(0.17)	(0.62)	(0.48)
Group								
Gini		0.41**	0.76		1.13	0.85		
		(0.13)	(0.45)		(0.24)	(0.27)		
Educational Selectivity		1.79*	1.36		1.30*	1.17		
		(0.44)	(0.50)		(0.16)	(0.25)		
Individual								
Bilingual			2.62			3.72**		0.93
(ref: monolingual)			(1.97)			(1.61)		(0.31)
Biological Parents			1.52			2.06+		1.94***
(ref: other family arrangement)			(0.62)			(0.79)		(0.24)
Female			0.57			1.27		1.11
			(0.19)			(0.25)		(0.09)
Visible Minority			0.69			0.62		1.82
			(0.50)			(0.18)		(0.70)
Quebec			0.99			0.91		1.46***
(ref: other province)			(0.86)			(0.25)		(0.13)
Dad: HS degree			1.09			0.84		1.55***
			(0.43)			(0.17)		(0.13)
Dad: BA+			3.11**			3.19***		2.97***
(ref: less than HS)			(1.21)			(0.78)		(0.32)
Age			1.03			0.93***		0,96***
			(0.02)			(0.01)		(.00)
N	340			1190			5940	

***P$\leq$.001 **p$\leq$.01
*p$\leq$.05 +p$\leq$.1